

Message Text

SECRET

PAGE 01 PRETOR 03789 01 OF 02 251316Z

45

ACTION SS-25

INFO OCT-01 ISO-00 SSO-00 /026 W
----- 116760

R 251237Z AUG 76

FM AMEMBASSY PRETORIA

TO SECSTATE WASHDC 5313

INFO AMEMBASSY LONDON

AMEMBASSY LUSAKA

AMEMBASSY MAPUTO

AMEMBASSY GABORONE

AMEMBASSY DAR ES SALAAM

S E C R E T SECTION 1 OF 2 PRETORIA 3789

EXDIS

E.O. 11652: GDS

TAGS: SF MILI ZA RH WA AO

SUBJ: RESPONSIVENESS OF SOUTH AFRICAN MILITARY TO
CIVILIAN CONTROL

REF: PRETORIA 3325 (NOTAL), PRETORIA 3383 (NOTAL)

1. SUMMARY: SOUTH AFRICA'S RAID ON A SWAPO CAMP IN ZAMBIA ON JULY 11 HAD REPERCUSSIONS SO EMBARRASSING TO SAG DIPLOMATIC INITIATIVES THAT IT HAS RAISED THE QUESTION OF WHY IT WAS PERMITTED, OR INDEED WHETHER OR NOT THE MILITARY FORCES ARE RESPONSIVE TO CIVILIAN CONTROL. WE BELIEVE THAT SOUTH AFRICA'S MILITARY FORCES ARE RESPONSIVE TO CIVILIAN CONTROL, BUT THAT IN THE AFRIKANER FRATERNITY ATMOSPHERE WHICH PERVADES UPPER ECHELONS OF SAG, INSTRUCTIONS GOVERNING OPERATIONS IN SENSITIVE AREAS SUCH AS NAMIBIA AND RHODESIA MAY NOT HAVE BEEN AS TIGHTLY DRAWN AS THEY SHOULD HAVE. THERE IS EVIDENCE THAT CONTROLS OVER MILITARY OPERATIONS HAVE BEEN TIGHTENED TO ASSURE THAT POTENTIAL POLITICAL RAMIFICATIONS OF ANY MILITARY ACTION ARE SCRUTINIZED BEFORE THEY ARE UNDERTAKEN. END SUMMARY.

SECRET

SECRET

PAGE 02 PRETOR 03789 01 OF 02 251316Z

2. THE COUNTRY TEAM HAS TRIED IN RECENT WEEKS TO

ARRIVE AT AN ASSESSMENT OF THE EXTENT TO WHICH THE SOUTH AFRICAN DEFENSE FORCES (SADF) MIGHT HAVE ACTED INDEPENDENTLY IN CARRYING OUT THE RAID ON SIALOLA, WHICH HAD AN ADVERSE EFFECT ON RELATIONS WITH ZAMBIA AND WITH THE INITIATIVES UNDERTAKEN FOLLOWING THE VORSTER-KISSINGER TALKS. THE RESPONSIVENESS OF THE SADF TO CIVILIAN CONTROL IS OF SPECIAL IMPORTANCE ALSO IN THE CASE OF RHODESIA, WHERE THERE REMAINS A GREAT DEAL OF UNCERTAINTY ABOUT THE EXTENT TO WHICH SOUTH AFRICA, OR THE SADF, MAY BE SUPPORTING THE SMITH REGIME . IN THE BROADEST TERMS, WE ARE OF THE OPINION THAT THE SADF IS A DISCIPLINED, HIGHLY PROFESSIONAL BODY WITH NO APPARENT DIVERGENCIES FROM THE VALUES OR OBJECTIVES OF THE GOVERNMENT IT SERVES. WE HAVE NO REASON TO QUESTION THE LOYALTY OF MILITARY DECISION MAKERS AT ANY LEVEL TO THE GOVERNMENT OF SOUTH AFRICA AS PRESENTLY CONSTITUTED, NOR DO WE DISCERN INDICATION THAT ANY ELEMENT OF THE MILITARY MIGHT BE INCLINED KNOWINGLY TO UNDERTAKE OR AUTHORIZE AN ACTION CONTRARY TO POLICY IN A MANNER WHICH WOULD EMBARRASS THE CIVILIAN LEADERS OF GOVERNMENT OR FORCE THEM INTO DIFFICULT CHOICES.

3. THE FOREGOING GENERAL EVALUATION MUST, HOWEVER, BE QUALIFIED. THE MILITARY FORCES ARE UNDOUBTEDLY AMONG THE CONSERVATIVE INFLUENCES IN THE GOVERNMENTAL STRUCTURE. GIVEN THE BASIC NATURE OF THEIR MISSION, THEY WOULD PREFER TO ACT AGAINST IDENTIFIABLE ENEMIES AS EARLY AND AS FAR FROM SOUTH AFRICA PROPER AS THEIR CAPABILITIES AND OPERATIONAL GUIDELINES MAY PERMIT. INDIVIDUALS WITHIN THE MILITARY ESTABLISHMENT ALMOST CERTAINLY ADVOCATE SUCH A "FORWARD DEFENSE" POSTURE. FURTHERMORE, WE HAVE DETECTED A LOOSENESS IN THE HANDLING OF GOVERNMENTAL BUSINESS WHICH IN PREVIOUS CIRCUMSTANCES OF RELATIVE ISOLATION MADE LITTLE DIFFERENCE BUT WHICH TODAY SOUTH AFRICA CAN NO LONGER AFFORD AS IT GETS INVOLVED IN DELICATE RELATIONSHIPS WITH HIGHLY NATIONALISTIC BLACK GOVERNMENTS WITH CONTIGUOUS BORDERS. HENCE, THERE IS A GOOD POSSIBILITY THAT CIVILIAN INSTRUCTIONS TO THE MILITARY HAVE NOT BEEN AS TIGHTLY DRAWN AS THEY SHOULD BE AND THAT THE MILITARY LACKING EXPERIENCE IN THE

SECRET

SECRET

PAGE 03 PRETOR 03789 01 OF 02 251316Z

INTERNATIONAL MILIEU HAVE BEEN INSENSITIVE TO THE POLITICAL IMPLICATIONS OF THEIR ACTIONS.

4. ALONG THE BORDER BETWEEN SOUTH WEST AFRICA AND ANGOLA, TASK FORCE 101, A JOINT ORGANIZATION OF ARMY AND AIR FORCE ELEMENTS COMMANDED BY MAJOR GENERAL I. GLEESON, HAS CONSIDERABLE RESOURCES AT ITS DISPOSAL IN LOCATIONS NEAR THE BORDER FOR USE IN "THE OPERATIONAL AREA," A

TERM WHICH HAS COME TO BE UNDERSTOOD TO MEAN SOUTH WEST AFRICA INCLUDING THE CAPRIVI STRIP, THE OVAMBO AND KAVANGO AREAS, AND AN ADJACENT BUT UNDEFINED AREA EXTENDING INTO ANGOLA AND ZAMBIA. WE BELIEVE THAT THE GUIDELINES ON MILITARY OPERATIONAL SCOPE ARE DEFINED AT THE TOP, PROBABLY NO LOWER THAN THE MINISTER OF DEFENSE LEVEL EVEN PRIOR TO THE ZAMBIA RAID. THE MILITARY ALMOST CERTAINLY UNDERSTOOD THE TYPE AND APPROXIMATE EXTENT OF CROSS-BORDER PENETRATION IT COULD MAKE WITHIN THE MEANING OF THE "HOT PURSUIT" DOCTRINE WHICH SOUTH AFRICA ACKNOWLEDGED IT WAS FOLLOWING IN THE BORDER AREA. PERIODIC PUBLIC REPORTS OF OPERATIONS IN "THE OPERATIONAL AREA" INCLUDED MENTION OF ATTACKS ON SWAPO BASES WHICH WERE UNDERSTOOD BY MILITARY CORRESPONDENTS AND INFORMED OBSERVERS TO BE NEAR BUT SOMEWHERE OUTSIDE THE SWA BORDERS. GLESSON, WELL KNOWN TO OUR ATTACHE PERSONNEL, IS CONSIDERED UNLIKELY TO DELIBERATELY OVERSTEP HIS INSTRUCTIONS AND RESPONSIBILITIES.

SECRET

NNN

SECRET

PAGE 01 PRETOR 03789 02 OF 02 251336Z

45

ACTION SS-25

INFO OCT-01 ISO-00 SSO-00 /026 W
----- 117218

R 251237Z AUG 76
FM AMEMBASSY PRETORIA
TO SECSTATE WASHDC 5314
INFO AMEMBASSY LONDON
AMEMBASSY LUSAKA
AMEMBASSY MAPUTO
AMEMBASSY GABORONE
AMEMBASSY DAR ES SALAAM

S E C R E T SECTION 2 OF 2 PRETORIA 3789

EXDIS

5. AVAILABLE INFORMATION LEADS US TO POSTULATE THAT, FOLLOWING SEVERAL WEEKS OF INTENSIVE ANTI-GUERILLA OPERATIONS WHICH HAD EXTENDED FOR THE FIRST TIME SOUTH OF OVAMBOLAND AND CAUSED GREAT CONCERN AMONG SWA CIVILIANS, THE MILITARY WERE HOT ON THE TRAIL OF A GUERRILLA UNIT WHICH WAS FLEEING TOWARD THE BORDER.

AT THE SAME TIME, IT WAS KNOWN THAT SWAPO PRESIDENT SAM NUJOMA, PLAGUED WITH NEAR REVOLT IN HIS MILITARY CAMPS IN ZAMBIA, WAS IN THE GENERAL AREA AND MAY EVEN HAVE BEEN THOUGHT TO BE AT THE CAMP WHICH WAS ATTACKED. THE RESPONSIBLE COMMANDER PROBABLY THOUGHT THAT HE WAS ACTING WITHIN HIS INSTRUCTIONS IN MOUNTING THE ATTACK, HAVING CARRIED OUT SOME OPERATIONS ON A SMALLER SCALE WITHIN ZAMBIA INTERMITTENTLY IN THE PAST WEEKS WITHOUT REPERCUSSIONS IN EITHER PRETORIA OR LUSAKA. WHETHER OR NOT HIS GUIDELINES REQUIRED SPECIFIC CLEARANCE AT HIGHER LEVELS THAN THE TASK FORCE HEADQUARTERS WE DO NOT KNOW. SOME FORM OF FURTHER NOTIFICATION MAY HAVE BEEN REQUIRED. AN INFORMED OFFICER OF THE DEPARTMENT OF FOREIGN AFFAIRS COMMENTED THAT "THE PEOPLE FELT THEY WERE DOING THEIR JOB" AND THAT "SOMETIMES THE WORD DOESN'T GET THROUGH IN TIME TO THE RIGHT PEOPLE." ON BALANCE WE BELIEVE THAT A SENIOR OFFICER IN THE FIELD THOUGHT HE WAS ACTING

SECRET

SECRET

PAGE 02 PRETOR 03789 02 OF 02 251336Z

WITHIN HIS INSTRUCTIONS WHEN THE RAID WAS MADE.

6. THERE ARE SEVERAL REPORTS THAT A HIGH-LEVEL INQUIRY WAS CONDUCTED SHORTLY AFTER THE ADVERSE CONSEQUENCES OF THE RAID BECAME APPARENT. IT RESULTED IN A GENERAL TIGHTENING OF INSTRUCTIONS, IMPROVEMENT OF COMMUNICATIONS FLOWS, AND CREATION OF A TOP-LEVEL REVIEW BODY RESPONSIBLE TO THE NATIONAL SECURITY COUNCIL WHICH MUST IN THE FUTURE APPROVE POTENTIALLY SENSITIVE MILITARY OPERATIONS. THE PRECISE DEFINITION OF THE KIND OF OPERATIONS WHICH MUST BE SUBMITTED FOR REVIEW IS UNCLEAR, BUT IT ALMOST CERTAINLY INCLUDES ANY CROSS-BORDER ACTIVITY.

7. ON THE RHODESIAN FRONT, THE EXTENT OF INVOLVEMENT OF THE MILITARY AND THE APPLICABLE GUIDELINES ARE MUCH LESS CLEAR. THE SOUTH AFRICAN MILITARY ESTABLISHMENT IS INVOLVED IN SUPPLY AND MATERIAL SUPPORT ACTIVITIES THOUGH PROBABLY NOT IN MILITARY OPERATIONS. IT HAS NOT BEEN POSSIBLE TO FORMULATE AN ESTIMATE OF THE EXTENT AND NATURE OF MILITARY SUPPLIES FLOWING INTO RHODESIA. SAG HAS CAREFULLY CONCEALED BOTH ITS THINKING AND ITS ACTIVITY IN RENDERING ASSISTANCE TO RHODESIA, THOUGH TRAINS AND FLIGHTS ARE KNOWN TO BE MOVING FREQUENTLY AND REGULARLY. CERTAINLY, MANY IN THE MILITARY WOULD ARGUE STRONGLY IN OPPOSITION TO ANY NEW LIMITATION IMPOSED ON THE FLOW OF MATERIAL SUPPORT TO RHODESIA, AND WE BELIEVE THAT THE PRIME MINISTER HIMSELF IS RELUCTANT TO PULL THE PLUG ON IAN SMITH UNTIL HE SEES SOME VIABLE ALTERNATIVE HE CAN SUPPORT. WHILE WE DO NOT EXCLUDE THE POSSIBILITY THAT SOME SADF UNITS OR INDIVIDUALS MAY EXCEED THEIR INSTRUCTIONS IN CARRYING OUT MATERIEL SUPPORT ACTIVITIES, THIS IS

DIFFICULT TO JUDGE SINCE WE DO NOT KNOW THE NATURE OR EXTENT OF PRESENT CONTROLS. IN THE ABSENCE OF CLEAR EVIDENCE THAT CIVIL AUTHORITIES MAY BE ATTEMPTING TO IMPOSE SOME NEW LIMIT, WE CONSIDER IT A DISTINCT POSSIBILITY THAT THE MILITARY MAY IN FACT HAVE BEEN TOLD TO ARRIVE AT ITS OWN JUDGMENTS AS TO HOW MUCH COULD BE SUPPLIED TO RHODESIA WITHOUT WEAKENING SOUTH AFRICA'S OWN DEFENSE CAPABILITIES.

8. TO RECAPITULATE, IT SEEMS PROBABLE THAT UNTIL THE
SECRET

SECRET

PAGE 03 PRETOR 03789 02 OF 02 251336Z

LAST YEAR OR SO THERE MAY HAVE BEEN NO CLEAR NEED TO DEFINE WITH PRECISION SOME ASPECTS OF THE LIMITS OF AUTHORITY OF THE MILITARY. WE BELIEVE MUCH LEEWAY WAS LEFT IN THE HANDS OF A HIGHLY EMOTIONAL AND SOMETIMES ERRATIC MINISTER OF DEFENSE. AS THE NECESSITY FOR MORE CAREFUL CONTROL HAS BEEN PERCEIVED, GREATER PRECISION IN THE DRAFTING OF INSTRUCTIONS AND CLOSER MONITORING IS BEING INTRODUCED. GIVEN THE MANY UNKNOWNNS, WE WILL BE ESPECIALLY ALERT FOR INDICATIONS THAT THE MILITARY ESTABLISHMENT MIGHT COME TO QUESTION CIVILIAN CONTROL, BUT AT PRESENT WE BELIEVE THE DIRECTIVES OF THE CIVILIAN GOVERNMENT WILL BE OBEYED WITHOUT SIGNIFICANT DEVIATION.
BOWDLER

SECRET

NNN

Message Attributes

Automatic Decaptioning: Z
Capture Date: 01 JAN 1994
Channel Indicators: n/a
Current Classification: UNCLASSIFIED
Concepts: PROVINCE, MILITARY GOVERNMENT, FORM OF GOVERNMENT, POLITICAL SITUATION
Control Number: n/a
Copy: SINGLE
Draft Date: 25 AUG 1976
Decaption Date: 28 MAY 2004
Decaption Note: 25 YEAR REVIEW
Disposition Action: RELEASED
Disposition Approved on Date:
Disposition Authority: coburnhl
Disposition Case Number: n/a
Disposition Comment: 25 YEAR REVIEW
Disposition Date: 28 MAY 2004
Disposition Event:
Disposition History: n/a
Disposition Reason:
Disposition Remarks:
Document Number: 1976PRETOR03789
Document Source: CORE
Document Unique ID: 00
Drafter: n/a
Enclosure: n/a
Executive Order: GS
Errors: N/A
Film Number: D760324-0701
From: PRETORIA
Handling Restrictions: n/a
Image Path:
ISecure: 1
Legacy Key: link1976/newtext/t19760821/aaaaarqq.tel
Line Count: 252
Locator: TEXT ON-LINE, ON MICROFILM
Office: ACTION SS
Original Classification: SECRET
Original Handling Restrictions: EXDIS
Original Previous Classification: n/a
Original Previous Handling Restrictions: n/a
Page Count: 5
Previous Channel Indicators: n/a
Previous Classification: SECRET
Previous Handling Restrictions: EXDIS
Reference: 76 PRETORIA 3325, 76 PRETORIA 3383
Review Action: RELEASED, APPROVED
Review Authority: coburnhl
Review Comment: n/a
Review Content Flags:
Review Date: 24 MAY 2004
Review Event:
Review Exemptions: n/a
Review History: RELEASED <24 MAY 2004 by BoyleJA>; APPROVED <08 SEP 2004 by coburnhl>
Review Markings:

Margaret P. Grafeld
Declassified/Released
US Department of State
EO Systematic Review
04 MAY 2006

Review Media Identifier:
Review Referrals: n/a
Review Release Date: n/a
Review Release Event: n/a
Review Transfer Date:
Review Withdrawn Fields: n/a
Secure: OPEN
Status: NATIVE
Subject: RESPONSIVENESS OF SOUTH AFRICAN MILITARY TO CIVILIAN CONTROL
TAGS: MILI, SF, ZA, RH, WA, AO
To: STATE
Type: TE
Markings: Margaret P. Grafeld Declassified/Released US Department of State EO Systematic Review 04 MAY 2006